

# Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project

DDMHS, Weeks Building, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-1601 (802-241-2638)

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project  
Advisory Group and Interested Parties

FROM: John Pandiani  
Janet Bramley

DATE: February 25, 2000

RE: Children with Parents in Jail

Increasing rates of incarceration of adults in the United States have led to increasing concern regarding the implication for the children of incarcerated adults. Concerns in this area include the availability of services for both children and incarcerated parents. The Vermont Mental Health Performance Indicator Project has begun analysis that will provide information on the number of young children who have parents in jail, the number of incarcerated adults who have young children, and the rate at which the children of incarcerated parents access community mental health services.

Anonymous extracts from three existing administrative/operational databases are being used in this analysis. A record of all Vermont resident births for 1990 through 1998 was obtained from the Vital Records division of the Vermont Department of Health. Each record included the parents' dates of birth and the child's date of birth and gender. Records of all episodes of incarceration during 1991 through 1999 were obtained from the Vermont Department of Corrections. Each record included the subject's date of birth and gender, and the dates, on which they entered and left a correctional facility. Finally, extracts from data files obtained from community mental health centers in Vermont provided a record of all children who received mental health services in Vermont during the 1990s. Each record included the child's date of birth and gender and the year(s) during which the child received community mental health services. Probabilistic Population Estimation was used to determine the overlap of these data sets. The analysis reported here used only the birth and Correction's data sets.

This week's PIP provides basic information on the number of young children born in Vermont during 1991 through 1995 whose parents had spent time in a correctional facility by the time the child was 5 years old. Results indicated that the father of more than one out of every seven children of men who were under 26 years when the child

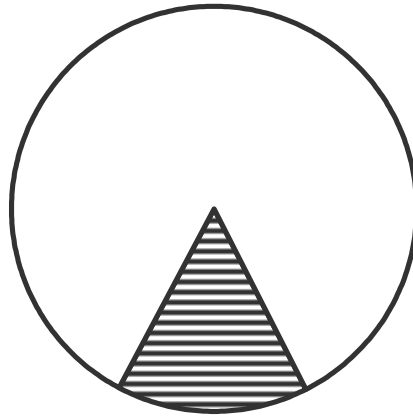
was born had been incarcerated before the child reached 5 years of age. The mother of one out of every twenty-five children of women who were under 26 years of age when the child was born had been incarcerated in Vermont before the child reached 5 years of age. These results may indicate a need for specialized mental health and other children's programs to meet the needs of these young people.

Future analyses will focus on the rates of incarceration of parents of children during different developmental stages of the child's life, the number and proportion of prisoners who have young children, and the rate at which children of incarcerated adults make use of community mental health services.

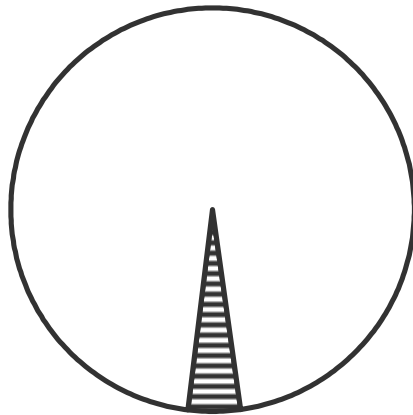
We look forward to your comments, your interpretation of these findings, and your suggestions for further research in this area to 802-241-2638 or e-mailed to [jpandiani@ddmhs.state.vt.us](mailto:jpandiani@ddmhs.state.vt.us).

## **Children of Young Parents: Percentage with a Parent in Jail During their First Five Years**

### **Children with Young Fathers**



### **Children with Young Mothers**



Includes all children born FY 1991-1995 whose parent was under 26 years at the time of birth.